Urbanization and the Southern United States

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Abstract

Cities in the Southern United States have experienced dynamic economic and population growth over the past half-century, challenging existing paradigms of urban form, race relations, social movements, and immigration. This review shows how the timing of Southern urbanization—much later than in the Northeast and Midwest—has contributed to Southern cities' distinctive spatial patterns and political and economic structures. Southern cities were crucial to regional transformation, including the Civil Rights Movement and the end of one-party rule in the South. Moreover, Southern cities exemplify key trends of the contemporary political economy: a new relationship to regional industrialization, new forms of entrepreneurial governance, flexible labor markets, the importance of finance and producer services, and "new destination" immigration. I conclude by examining two Southern cities for their relevance to central themes in contemporary social research: Atlanta for the study of the African American experience and New Orleans for the sociology of catastrophe.

INTRODUCTION

> *There exists among us . . . both North and South—a profound conviction that the South is another land, sharply differentiated from the rest of the American nation, and exhibiting within itself a remarkable homogeneity. . . . That it is different and that it is solid nearly everybody is agreed.*
>
> *—Cash 1941 [1991], p. xlvii*

Here articulated by W.J. Cash in his mid-century classic *The Mind of the South*, the image of Southern separateness retains a stubborn hold on the American imagination. Still, past pillars of the Solid South—rural dominance, one-party rule, and Jim Crow segregation—no longer prevail. The South remains a relative stronghold of conservatism, but the modern Republican Party does not simply fill the space left vacant by Dixiecrat demise. Moreover, the South is no longer a moribund agricultural economy, bleeding rural black and white population to the North and far West. In fact, the region has for decades been a population and economic dynamo, while stubbornly still lagging on a host of social indicators such as education and health outcomes. In examining the political, social, and economic transformations characterizing the region since mid-century, one finds that the dynamics of rapid urban growth, beginning in the 1930s and accelerating after World War II, play a central and still underappreciated role. Southern urbanization is crucial to understanding regional change; it also extends an invitation for new sociological research that updates central topics, from race relations to globalization.

Though of intense interest to historians and literary scholars, the American South is seldom addressed by the mainstream of American sociology (to be fair, American regionalism of any sort is rarely acknowledged explicitly as a variable).[1] The peculiarity of the South in US history may explain the neglect. The discipline of sociology took shape in its classical form as the study of modernity: capitalism, industrialization, secularization, and urbanization (Giddens 1971, Parsons et al. 1961). As a rural caste society steeped in evangelical religion and contemptuous of bourgeois capitalism, the South in these terms may as well have been the Trobriand Islands. With the quantitative turn in sociology, regional idiosyncrasy confounds the search for generalizable laws of social behavior. Moreover, urban sociology, in which space remains central even in the age of "abstracted empiricism" (Mills 1959), was dominated by the Chicago School in the first half of the twentieth century and has tended to focus throughout the twentieth century on the largest US cities: New York, Chicago, and more recently, Los Angeles (Dear 2002, Park et al. 1925, Sassen 2001, Scott & Soja 1996). Meanwhile, as Rushing (2009, p. 11) notes, "few scholars recognize Southern cities as real 'American' cities." Even with "a place for space" tenuously reasserted in the discipline in recent years (Gieryn 2000), the space of the American South has been left in a sociological black box.

A general neglect is in itself not a good reason for taking new interest in any particular topic; however, I argue that there is much cutting-edge empirical and theoretical value in turning our sociological lenses onto the South and its cities. In part, the justification is a matter of simple demography: The South has been among the most dynamic regions in population growth for decades, expanding at the expense of the stagnant Northeast and Midwest (Pandit 1997). At the same time, the unique history and contemporary conditions of the South mean that Southern cities take shape in ways not well captured by the standard models of urban culture and morphology generated on the Northern prototype. The South has modernized and urbanized, but it has done so in a manner that requires that we update the content of those fluid concepts.

The South is increasingly at the leading edge of crucial new developments in political economy, including neoliberalism and globalization. Not only urban sociologists should take

[1] Griswold's (2008) *Regionalism and the Reading Class* is a lone exception among recent sociological work.

note. Immigration scholars now observe the rise of New Destination immigrant communities and refugee resettlement in the US interior, notably the Southeast (Durand et al. 2005, Lippard & Gallagher 2011, Massey 2008). Scholars of race relations observe a movement of African Americans back below the Mason-Dixon Line that has now spanned decades (McHugh 1987), as well as the suburbanization of blacks most prominently displayed in deconcentrated Southern cities (Lacy 2007). Moreover, although economic growth in the industrial North really did raise most ships during the two decades following World War II, the South illustrates the contemporary trend of persistent poverty and stagnant wages even alongside economic expansion.

This review begins with the regional and national forces driving Southern urbanization, a process that gained steam later and in strikingly different terms than in the North. Next, I examine the role of cities in mid-century Southern politics, dominated by the Civil Rights Movement and the reactionary response to it. Then I trace in turn contemporary trends: the tensions between ongoing sprawl and core city development, economic globalization and neoliberalism, and new destination immigration and refugee resettlement. The review concludes by examining two specific Southern cities that serve as particularly promising terrain for new sociological research: Atlanta and New Orleans. Atlanta is the emerging capital of black America, arguably more relevant for understanding the future of African Americans than older industrial strongholds like Detroit or even Chicago. And in an age when extreme weather events and other sorts of large-scale disasters may grow ever more frequent, New Orleans provides a template for the sociological study of catastrophe and response.

A last note on terms: Defining the boundaries of the American South is not straightforward, and regional homogeneity should not be overstated. I include all of the states where slavery was legal before 1860, though special note should be made of Texas and Florida, which are outliers in particular ways. These states have very different histories of immigration from all the other states under consideration. Florida's most significant city, Miami, is well theorized as a gateway immigration city and a central point of cultural and economic articulation to Latin America, a semi-global city evoking analogy to the relationship between San Francisco and the Pacific Rim (Lee 2011, Sassen & Portes 1993). Texas is a border state and also so massive as to be a region unto itself. Thus, although certain elements common to Southern cities are evidenced in these states, including tendencies to sprawl and neoliberal governance, there are also important distinctions, especially on the immigration issue. The American South in this review thus refers to Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri, Arkansas, Florida, Texas, and Louisiana.

SOUTHERN URBANIZATION: FROM THE SEPARATE SOUTH TO SUBURBAN SPRAWL

Settlement Space in the Separate South

The unique history of the American South placed it outside of the central tendencies of modernity, including urbanization, for much of American history. As a quasi-colonial economy even within the independent United States, the South developed on strikingly different terms than the North. Until 1865 its economy was based on a system of slavery that retarded bourgeois capitalism and "the rational capitalistic organization of formally free labor" (Weber 1958). The slavery-based economy had a powerful impact on the development of settlement space; as economic historian Wright (1996) notes, the fact that the fundamental basis of Southern wealth—enslaved labor—was portable mitigated against permanent settlement and associated developments: "Slavery generated a weaker and looser connection between property holders and the land they occupied" (p. 17).

Even very small towns were far less frequent in the antebellum South than in the North (McCurry 1995). The lack of towns also meant a lack of infrastructural development, as well as virtually nonexistent industry and indifference toward the exploitation of abundant nonagricultural resources such as coal (Lee 2005). The aborted decade of Reconstruction following the war did bring outside investment into the region and a push toward modernization (Foner 1988), a move that white Southerners bitterly resented and one successfully headed off by "the revolution of 1876" (Du Bois 1903 [2006], p. 11) after which the South continued to develop on a separate track from the North, with a social and economic system now predicated on racial apartheid and indentured servitude. Politically, the South was ruled by a monolithic and regionally distinct Democratic party that increasingly diverged from its Northern counterparts, especially by the mid-twentieth century, on issues of social welfare and civil rights (Frederickson 2001).

The shift of the Southern elite from "laborlords to landlords" (Wright 1996, pp. 17–50) had the effect of increasing permanent settlement and elevating the role of King Cotton in the Southern economy (p. 34), but the South continued to resist convergence with the North in wages, urbanization, and industrialization. To the extent that Southern cities developed at all, they were ports perched on riverways or the gulf coast (Memphis and New Orleans) and rail lines (Nashville, Charlotte, and Atlanta) that served as way stations for agricultural products and especially cotton—arguably a historical foundation for these cities' contemporary strengths in transport and logistics (Hanchett 1998, Ross et al. 2009, Rushing 2009). The Southern labor market essentially operates according to its own regional logic, separate from the country as a whole, at least until the Depression (Cobb 1984). Beginning in the 1930s, a host of factors coalesced—the collapse of the cotton market, the mechanization of agriculture, the imposition of federal minimum wage laws, the Northern migration of black and white Southerners, and the belated acceptance of federal aid dollars (Adams 2006, Cobb 1993, Cobb & Namoroto 1984, Wright 1996)—that fatally wounded the terms of Southern economic isolation and ultimately of Jim Crow segregation and one-party rule as well (Lassiter 2006).

Race in the Urbanizing South

From their origins as little more than trading posts and county seats in the postbellum South, regional cities contained significant African American populations, 50% or more in many cases, although black and white Southerners still lived overwhelmingly in rural environments until the 1930s. Historians of the African American urban experience focus mainly on the effects of the Great Migration and settlement patterns in cities like Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia (Goings & Mohl 1995). Still, African Americans were relatively small and isolated minorities in Northern cities until mid-century, and black Southerners encountered a much different social landscape in Southern versus Northern cities. "Because of their unique urban form (less centralized) and economic function (commercial or light industry rather than heavy industry), most Southern cities had considerably lower levels of residential segregation than Northern metropolises prior to World War II" (Kusmer 1995, pp. 462–63). Thus, in contrast to the monolithic and hermetic contiguous ghettos such as that described by Drake & Cayton (1945 [1993]) on Chicago's South Side, African Americans in the cities of the South were far more dispersed and spatially integrated with the poor and working-class white population (Adams 2006, Brown & Kimball 1995, Hanchett 1998, Silver & Moeser 1995, Taeuber 1975).

This obviously does not indicate that Southern race relations were more progressive than in the North, but only that the existence of de jure Jim Crow segregation led to different spatial patterns along with different tactics for the maintenance of white supremacy before Civil Rights. Egerton (1995) evokes a common adage in summing up the distinction:

"In the South it doesn't matter how close Negroes get as long as they don't get too high; in the North, it doesn't matter how high they get as long as they don't get too close" (p. 50). But as the struggles for black freedom intensified in the South during the 1950s and 1960s, geographic divisions between white and black areas began to solidify, accompanied by significant suburban white flight. Lassiter (2006, p. 4) writes, "During the postwar decades, the political economies of southern metropolises such as Atlanta and Charlotte and Richmond increasingly resembled their sprawling counterparts in the North and the West, with pervasive structures of racial and class segregation imbedded in the built environment rather than enforced by Jim Crow legislation." Still, suburban sprawl is not really analogous to the ordered segmentation that divided black and white neighborhoods in the North, with aggressively policed boundaries (Suttles 1968). The lack of dense cores in cities such as Atlanta or Jacksonville led to a spatialization of racial divisions that cannot be directly analogized to the Northern industrial cities (Henderson 2006, Paulsen & Watson 2004). It remains the case today that within city limits black spatial segregation in Southern cities has never reached the levels found in the postindustrial cities of the North (Massey & Denton 1993).

Suburban Sprawl, Federal Dollars, and the Military Industrial Complex

White flight is only one factor accounting for the intensely deconcentrated nature of Southern cities. Sprawling growth is in part merely a consequence of timing. Southern city population exploded in the age of the automobile and interstate highway construction (another New Deal legacy) and lacked the traditions of dense industrial agglomeration so integral to Northern urban morphology—the classic model being the Chicago School's concentric zones and dense patchwork of ethnic neighborhoods (Park et al. 1925). To a large extent, Southern cities follow the patterns of polynucleated growth that proponents of the Los Angeles School have argued is the morphology of postmodern urbanism (Dear 2000, Soja 1989). In fact, even Los Angeles evinces significantly greater population density than do large Southern cities such as Atlanta, Nashville, Orlando, Houston, Charlotte, and Jacksonville (Fulton et al. 2001, Gibson 1998, Lopez & Hynes 2003).[2]

Given the well-known antipathy of white Southerners to the federal government, the degree to which New Deal programs and subsequent injections of federal dollars into the region have spurred the dynamic growth of Southern cities and with them the regional economy is startling (Luker 1997). Agricultural policy during the Depression—much of it pointedly directed at excluding rural blacks from New Deal benefits (Katznelson 2005)—had the effect of hastening the mechanization of agriculture and pushing rural populations toward urban centers, including for the first time large numbers of blacks and whites to Southern cities. Investment in highways and housing subsidization favoring the suburbs allowed for these cities to grow in their characteristically sprawling manner, while subsidizing new mechanisms of racial subordination (Beauregard 2006, Gotham 2002). In his engaging mid-1990s survey of the American South, former *New York Times* regional bureau chief Peter Applebome (1996, p. 45) notes of Cobb County, Georgia, then the home district of House Speaker Newt Gingrich, "A 1993 study in *Common Cause* magazine found that Cobb took in $3.4 billion in federal funds in 1992 and ranked third among suburban counties nationally in the amount of federal aid it received." This subsidy included massive highway investment, airport improvements, the Dobbins Air Force Base, and federal dollars flowing to defense contractor Lockheed.

The disproportionate investment of defense dollars in the Sunbelt, from California through

[2] Among the top 20 population centers in 1990, Jacksonville had by far the lowest density, 800 per square mile, roughly one-ninth that of Los Angeles (Gibson 1998).

the Southeast, produced largely suburban and exurban agglomerations of military bases and private contractors and is deeply implicated in the economy, politics, and culture of the region (Hooks 2001, Markusen et al. 1991). In World War II, "the federal government made unparalleled industrial investments.... Especially in less industrialized areas such as the South, these World War II investments provided a decisive spark" (Hooks 2001, p. 259). Although most defense manufacturing was federally owned during World War II, subsequent development of the defense industry has relied on an intricate symbiosis between public and private entities. Contemporary examples include Dobbins Air Force Base and Lockheed Martin in suburban Cobb County, and the massive Redstone Arsenal base and associated private manufacturing and research enterprises outside of Huntsville, Alabama. The location of the postwar military industrial complex in the Southeast (and far West) contributes substantial employment to the region, including a nontrivial component of highly educated, high-skilled workers in fields such as engineering (Campbell 1993). In some cases, the impact is startling if little recognized, such as the postwar relocation of German scientists, including decorated Nazi war hero turned NASA pioneer Wernher von Braun, to Huntsville, where rockets were developed in service of both American airborne military capacity and the US space program. Huntsville, once known as "the watercress capital of the world," thus earned a new nickname, "Rocket City, USA" (Bergaust 1963, Laney 2008).

SOUTHERN CITIES AND THE END OF JIM CROW

Cities and the Civil Rights Movement

Introducing the second edition of his now classic *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970*, McAdam (1999) notes, "The prevailing model of movement emergence was shaped to a considerable degree by the study of, and reflections on, the American Civil Rights Movement" (p. xxx). Indeed, the Civil Rights Movement occupies for American social movements scholars a place analogous to that of Chicago in American urban studies—Civil Rights is "The Movement," as Chicago is "The City." Here, then, we ought to be attentive to the considerable role that urbanization in the South played in creating the conditions of possibility for the successes of the organized challenge to Jim Crow, as well as for the ultimate limits of that victory. That rural-to-urban migration in the South was central for the movement is, I think, beyond dispute. Moreover, explicit theorization of the role of urban space in contentious politics has the potential to enrich the social movements literature generally (Sewell 2001). Cities catalyze social movements; they are sites of struggle, and, in many cases, they are the objects of struggle as well (Castells 1983, Harvey 2003, Lefebvre 2003). The correspondence between large-scale Southern urbanization in the postwar period and the onset of the Civil Rights Movement is anything but a coincidence.

As noted above, rural-to-urban migration by African Americans typically conjures up images of Southern sharecroppers moving to Detroit. Although at the turn of the twentieth century, 90% of black Americans lived in the South and in overwhelmingly rural environments, the Great Northern Migration did indeed lead to the move of millions of black Southerners to Northern industrial cities, which further contributed to the flowering of emancipated black consciousness in communities such as New York's Harlem (Lewis 1997) or Chicago's Bronzeville (Baldwin 2007). It is telling that the first significant black cultural and political movements of the twentieth century—the New Negro Movement, the Harlem Renaissance, the Niagara Group, and the NAACP—all took shape in the urbanized North, even while only a minority of American blacks as yet lived there. While Southern blacks remained poor and socially isolated in rural residences, the North afforded the organizational opportunities abetted by spatial propinquity, as well as the development of the nascent black middle class (Curwood 2010, Frazier 1957).

World War I is credited with changing black consciousness, opening up new, more cosmopolitan vistas and more transgressive attitudes vis-à-vis prevailing relations of racial subordination (Ellis 1992, Williams 2004). However, both Southern and Northern blacks served in the military, while the New Negro was assuredly a person of the Northern metropolis before the 1930s (Locke 1925). Even the rural folk culture of the Mississippi Delta, arguably the very foundation of American and world popular music today, entered the national consciousness only after being filtered through the Northern strongholds of Harlem, South Chicago, Kansas City, and Detroit [and, to a much lesser extent before the 1940s, Memphis and Chattanooga (Scott 2008)]. New Orleans is generally recognized as the seedbed of Jazz music; favorite sons such as Louis Armstrong nevertheless made the Northern migration before entering into the consciousness of mainstream America. No doubt this is due to the material resources provided by urban environments but perhaps also to the cosmopolitan subjectivity that Simmel (1971) argues is fostered by life in the metropolis.

Intraregional urbanization by Southern African Americans is comparatively neglected, eclipsed by the Great Migration, even though blacks made up a greater percentage of the population in—much smaller and less developed—Southern cities (Eichenlaub et al. 2010). During the 1930s, the push of agricultural collapse and the stagnant labor markets of the Depression-wracked North led to a condition in which, for the first time, large-scale migration of black and white rural Southerners to Southern cities took place. This development set the stage for the subsequent radicalization of African Americans within the region.

Major scholars of the movement attest to this connection, with varying degrees of rigor. Morris (1984, p. 79) notes:

> Black migration to Southern and Northern cities in the first half of the twentieth century had a profound impact on the group structure of black society. During that period, *Southern cities* experienced tremendous growth and industrialization, thanks in significant part to the migration of rural blacks.... The newly urbanized blacks were introduced to a world where organized struggle was evident. Black workers, concentrated in unskilled jobs and in the most unhealthy locations at the factories, developed a group identity around their shared situation in the workplace. (emphasis added)

Such cognitive effects in the early twentieth century were indeed evident—in the North. Southern cities did not experience "tremendous" growth and industrialization throughout the first half of the twentieth century, but only after the 1930s. McAdam (1999, p. 77) is more precise in his periodization: "The collapse of cotton tenancy [in the 1930s] triggered a massive rural-to-urban migration *within the South* that was ultimately to afford blacks a stronger organizational context within which they could mobilize" (emphasis added).

The end of World War II presaged the growth of black urban organization in the South. Certainly, another war to preserve global freedom galvanized black resistance to Jim Crow (Woodward 1966, p. 132), but just as clearly urbanization was a crucial catalytic force, so that World War II impacted Southern race politics in a way that World War I did not. Urbanization was a factor in mobilizing resources, generating organizational density and diversity, and hosting crucial institutions, including the urban black church and universities such as Fisk, Morehouse, and Spellman, which fed the membership of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Morris (1984, p. 5) points out, "The urban church, by virtue of its quality of religious services and potential for political action, developed into a more efficient organization than its rural counterpart." Also important was the migration of movement-conscious individuals from progressive Northern city environments to the South (Isaac 2008). Cities North and South contributed to the cosmopolitan dispositions

crucial to the framing of the Civil Rights struggle, connecting black history to world history and the Cold War struggles over freedom. Finally, urban environments provided the stage on which the drama of the Civil Rights struggle unfolded, in Baton Rouge, Little Rock, Selma, Montgomery, Washington, DC, and many other places. The images of nonviolent protestors and the brutal repression by Southern white authorities were transmitted in an increasingly mass-mediated culture (Gitlin 1980), shocking the conscience of the nation in a way that isolated acts of brutality in the countryside could not and arguably providing the last spur to the legislative victories of 1964 and 1965.

Suburban Politics and Political Realignment in the South

The 1960s were characterized not only by the triumph of the Civil Rights Movement in eradicating de jure segregation; the political culture of the South was changing among whites as well, with the monolithic rule of the Dixiecrats giving way to new forms of conservatism. Southern urbanization is a key feature in conceptualizing both black and white politics in the South, especially in the 1960s and subsequent decades, when the South would undergo an electoral realignment that has changed the face of national politics. Thus, although urbanization generated material and symbolic resources for the Civil Rights Movement, the rise of the Sunbelt South and its sprawling cities also transformed white politics and diluted the Solid South defined by Dixiecrat rule and massive resistance to federally mandated integration. The constituents for Southern demagogues like George Wallace were drawn mainly from rural landowners and members of the white poor and working classes, who could not easily pivot to new strategies of de facto segregation (Bartley 1969). By the 1960s, these rural interests had lost considerable ground compared with the increasing clout of the cities and their suburbs, many populated by migrants from the North with different experiences informing race and spatial politics. The new urban/suburban elites saw their interests much differently, given the need to attract talent and capital from the North. For them, televised images of an atavistic white South armed with tear gas, billy clubs, and attack dogs undermined the New South they hoped to create (Douglas 1994). Bringing in "outside firms . . . required that they present their towns and cities as safe civilized communities. . . . In repeated cases, cities and towns found that turmoil over segregation in schools or other local facilities made industrial recruitment difficult or impossible" (Wright 1996, p. 266).

Atlanta, a New South city perched on the edge of Deep South Georgia, advertised its climate of racial moderation with the slogan "the city too busy to hate" (Cobb 1993, ch. 5; Kruse 2005), a catchphrase it owned only because Charlotte failed to think of it first. Neither Charlotte nor Atlanta was completely free of ugly racial conflict during the Civil Rights era, but their boosters and business elites wished it so, and in the immediate aftermath of the 1960s some whites took to desegregation with the zeal of converts, especially in Charlotte (Sokol 2006, pp. 175–76). This stance of racial moderation and probusiness boosterism was a catalyst for the tremendous subsequent growth of these avatars of the late-twentieth-century New South city (Dittmer 1997, Stone 1989). The growing influence of the Sunbelt elite in the New South has more recently led to a reevaluation of electoral realignment in the South, with the shift of white Southerners into the Republican column famously anticipated in Phillips's (1969) *The Emerging Republican Majority*. Richard Nixon's vaunted Southern Strategy is largely interpreted as an attempt to poach voters from George Wallace using thinly veiled appeals to white racism (Carter 1995). It is the case that many former segregationists made the switch to the Republican Party (but not Wallace!), including long-serving Senators Jesse Helms and (also former Dixiecrat presidential candidate) Strom Thurmond. Still, the electoral base of Nixon's Silent Majority has many differences from that of the Dixiecrats that once ruled the South, not least

heavily suburban residence. The racial coding of the new conservatism is more than just a matter of cosmetics; it represents a qualitatively new manner of color-blind racism supplanting the naked white supremacy of an earlier era (Bonilla-Silva 2006, Omi & Winant 1994).

In a seminal recent study, Lassiter (2006, p. 1) argues compellingly for the overlooked geographic component to this shift in the South: "White-collar families that claimed membership in the Silent Majority rallied around a 'color-blind' discourse of suburban innocence that depicted residential segregation as the class-based outcome of meritocratic individualism." Thus, the politics of the Sunbelt South led to a "longer-term convergence of Southern and national politics around the suburban ethos of middle-class entitlement" (Lassiter 2006, p. 3). The Civil Rights era, corresponding to the first wave of mass urbanization/suburbanization in the South, saw the collapse of two pillars of Southern exceptionalism—Jim Crow and one-party rule—undermined by the prior decline of the third: rural economic and political dominance. This was followed by three decades of political realignment in the selection of the national executive, in which the South led the transformation of the Republican Party, but not, as is glibly argued, in the image of the Dixiecrats.

GLOBALIZATION AND THE AMERICAN SOUTH

Just as the once outlying South has assumed a lead role in shaping national conservative politics, it has also been an underappreciated leader of major shifts in the late-twentieth-century political economy. Neoliberalism and globalization, those keywords of contemporary critical theory, have not skipped the South, though scholars have been slow to grasp this fact. The persistent imagination of Southern isolation undoubtedly contributes to a delayed recognition of the place of the American South in the contemporary global economy, a fact only recently rectified with a spate of edited volumes and articles coming from both the humanities and the social sciences during the first decade of the twenty-first century (Carlton & Coclanis 2003, Cobb & Stueck 2005, Peacock et al. 2005, Smith & Cohn 2004). Even here, the notion of the South as a laggard and a subordinate is difficult to shake, with the sweeping power of globalization taken to be powerful enough to penetrate even the region's reactionary bastions.

In fact, the South and its urban areas should be understood, for better or worse, as vanguards rather than laggards in crucial trends of globalization, particularly its neoliberal variants. Writes Nonini (2005, p. 256): "The South is no longer, nor has it been for some time, a residual region, for in the last three decades it has pioneered nationally many economic institutions and practices that now go by the name post-Fordism or flexibility" (see also Amin 1995 and Harvey 1989 on post-Fordism). Arguably, the region's prior isolation is a source of advantage in the contemporary landscape. The timing of Southern entry into the wider economy, shedding its quasi-colonial status, left it as more or less virgin territory, its regional economy free to develop according to the logic of neoliberal, global capitalism. This signals a distinctive spatial logic, including patterns of industrialization that take shape outside of the urban cores. Below, I examine spatial patterns of Southern industry, with the understanding that the relationship between cities and their hinterlands are systemic—the nonurban character of new industrial development is crucial in understanding the logic by which Southern cities take shape. The emergence of Southern cities as financial and logistical centers shows in regional microcosm the logics that drive urban development generally in response to global capitalism.

Southern Industry in the Era of Globalization

Typically, geographic redistribution of industry to the American South in the last half-century is interpreted as responding to the region's favorable business climate—low taxes, the absence of unions, and a permissive labor

and environmental regulatory environment—previewing the race-to-the-bottom strategies of increasingly mobile capital in the era of globalization. Less appreciated has been the aggressive bidding by Southern municipalities to subsidize new plant construction, forms of public/private partnership that sit uneasily with neoliberalism's utopian free-market imaginings (Harvey 2005) but that in fact are quite consistent with what Brenner & Theodore (2002) refer to as "actually existing neoliberalism." Meanwhile, globalization both gives to and takes away from regional industrial development and employment. On the one hand, the South has been the recipient of tremendous foreign direct investment in manufacture. On the other hand, globalization has also undermined the traditional regional strengths in low-wage textile manufacture through competition from the developing world (Eckes 2005), a fact that has led many Southern conservatives to jettison their faith in free-market globalization in this one case, calling for tariff protections.

The Southern antipathy to unions is the stuff of legend; Cobb argues that unions were damned in the South by "the triple bugaboo of Yankeeism, race-mixing and communism" (quoted in Applebome 1996, p. 188). Still, those bugaboos are less relevant in explaining low union participation in the contemporary, post–Civil Rights South, which aggressively courts national and global capital two decades past the fall of the Berlin Wall. In fact, the argument that the contemporary Southern labor market is merely the continuation of a long-standing regional commitment to maintaining low wages is hard to sustain, given that union participation in the South has actually declined since the middle 1960s (Cornfield & Canak 2006, p. 163; Eckes 2005, p. 43). Wright (1996, p. 264) argues that the failure of unionization in the South is "a sign of the late twentieth-century American times, not the persistence of the Old South." This may be true, but if not Old South legacies, at least the absence of sclerotic traditions of powerful unions that still persist in Northern cities such as Detroit has allowed the South to take a lead role in defining the new economic landscape. Moreover, the timing of Southern industrialization allows for the development of factories outside of urban strongholds, so integral in an earlier era for fostering labor solidarity.

The Southern business climate courts investment not only from the North, but also from around the globe. Notes Cobb (2005, p. 1), "From an industrial development perspective, the South may have become the nation's most globalized region. It attracted more than half the foreign businesses drawn to the United States in the 1990s." This has been especially notable in a raft of auto plant openings since the 1980s. These include "a $1.2 billion, 6,000 job Nissan plant in Smyrna, Tennessee; the $3 billion, 5,900 Saturn plant in Spring Hill, Tennessee;[3] the $2 billion, 4,000 job BMW plant in Greer, South Carolina; and the $300 million, 1,500 job Mercedes-Benz plant in Vance, Alabama" (Applebome 1996, p. 186). Both foreign and domestic automakers investing in the region have favored suburban and exurban locales, allowing horizontal factory development and service by interstate trucking. Union penetration is low among these new plants, and they are free to adopt more flexible, just-in-time strategies of production and labor organization and pay substantially lower wages, in contrast to counterparts in Michigan (Fujita & Hill 1995, Kim 1995).

New auto plants dramatically raise the local wage in formerly depressed Southern communities, but only at the expense of a general lowering of the manufacturing wage nationwide. Writes Austen (2009, p. 36), "Non-union Toyota, as the new automotive leader [, represents] nothing less than the high end of the lowered options that are available to working-class Americans." Instead of a separate labor market, the South and the North experienced wage convergence in the late twentieth century,

[3]The failed Saturn brand, of course, was a subsidiary of American General Motors, but it is also the exception showing the rule, as it formed in an attempt to mimic production techniques associated with Japanese automakers, and unlike in General Motor's Michigan plants, its workforce was nonunionized.

but only as Southern-based enterprises, such as nonunion automakers or retail giant Walmart, increasingly set the terms in an age of working-class decline (Greenhouse 2008).

Globalization and Neoliberalism in the Southern City

The nonurban nature of Southern industry impacts the nature of regional cities, which lack the signature spaces of the industrial era that still shape Northern landscapes, both factories and the densely built working-class neighborhoods that surrounded them. The tremendous growth of these cities after the 1960s responded almost entirely to the imperatives of a postindustrial, service-based economy, exemplified by Atlanta and Charlotte. "The fact that the Atlanta MSA [metropolitan statistical area] recently lost a significant number of manufacturing jobs is not so remarkable since in comparison to other large MSAs, Atlanta has historically had a much smaller manufacturing base, and thus had less to lose" (Ross et al. 2009, p. 72). In this sense, the region is a microcosm of the global economy: The manufacturing base is dispersed, but cities concentrate administration, logistics, and producer services to provide command-and-control capacity. Like the global city economy described by Sassen (2001), Southern cities are service-based and economically polarized (polarization that also breaks down to a significant degree on racial lines), though they are typically thought to articulate to a regional rather than global economy (Jaret & Myers 1988). Moreover, Southern cities, aggressively courting business relocation, lacking the same degree of expensive entitlement obligations, and practicing laissez-faire policies of residential expansion, preview a general shift to entrepreneurialism as the signature form of late-twentieth-century urban governance (Feagin 1988, Johansson 2007).

Miami, with the fourth largest concentration of foreign bank offices; Charlotte, with its robust financial sector including Bank of America; Atlanta, with the nation's third largest concentration of Fortune 500 headquarters; Memphis, with its exceptional strengths in global shipping activities; and Nashville and Atlanta, with their substantial culture industry production all feature enterprises that transcend the regional and the national economy. Southern cities have also succeeded in improving their global profile by the courting of mediatized mega-events such as the Olympics and the Super Bowl (Burbank et al. 2002) and successfully marketing themselves to global tourists, with cities such as Orlando, Miami, New Orleans, Memphis, Atlanta, and Nashville developing robust tourist and convention economies (Alonso 2007, Foglesong 2003, Gotham 2007, Newman 1999, Rushing 2009).

Trends generally associated with more fluid, unregulated, and nonunion labor markets flourish in the Southern context, for example global shipping magnate FedEx's creative use of flexible, just-in-time labor (Rushing 2009, pp. 86–87; Smith et al. 2005, pp. 23–38). Rushing (2009, pp. 86–93) argues that FedEx's location in Memphis, now home to the busiest freight airport in the world, is rooted in part in the legacy of British colonialism and the transnational cotton trade. Meanwhile, global behemoth Walmart, headquartered in tiny Bentonville, Arkansas, has grown to become the world's largest employer and has forced massive innovations in retail. With its management of part-time and contingent labor, increasingly setting wage and price standards for the exploding service sector (Neumark et al. 2008), as well as its innovative uses of information technology and globalized supply chains, Walmart sets rather than follows global agendas. Here, too, we may see a regional stamp imprinted on the world economy; Moreton (2009) suggests that the service ethos of Walmart builds on the robust evangelical traditions of the South, especially in the exploitation of female labor. Such special regional legacies may well contribute to the shape of these contemporary global enterprises, but if this is so, it is only evidence of how Southern convergence with the world economy drives, rather than merely reflects, broad trends of globalization.

New Urbanism and the Creative Class

If Walmart remains an emblem of small-town sensibility even as it reaches around the world for customers and merchandise, the presumably unsophisticated South now features more cosmopolitan dispositions and amenities as well. Indeed, Bentonville itself, with a population of 35,000, is now a serious destination for arts aficionados owing to recently opened Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, funded by Walmart heiress Alice Walton and designed by world class architect Moshe Safdie. Beyond high art, the Arkansas town also has a range of consumption amenities appropriate to a major center of global enterprise. In larger Southern metro areas, there are also counter trends challenging the traditions of sprawl and weak core city identities. This, too, reflects the realities of the global economy and especially the interurban competition for the educated, high value-added workers that Florida (2002) has named the creative class. If the South is traditionally known for its low-wage, low-skill workforce, it nevertheless has not been left out of the innovative economy exemplified by Silicon Valley and the production of new technologies in fields such as biotechnology and new media design. This is particularly true of the Research Triangle in North Carolina, of the Virginia suburbs of Washington, DC, and of Austin, Texas, a cultural, economic, and political outlier in oil-rich, deeply conservative Texas (Long 2010, Orum 1987). While these bastions of cultural liberalism and technological innovation are taken to be regional exceptions, in fact cities throughout the South are competing to diversify their cultural and economic profiles in a similar manner, with Memphis vying to enhance its biotechnology sector (Rushing 2009) and Nashville emerging as a major player in health-care enterprise.

Cities around the nation are moving to revitalize their urban cores, justifying local arts agendas and new design policies as economic imperatives. These are presumed to create attractive environments for educated residents who favor lively, walkable neighborhoods and a diverse mix of amenities that include live music scenes, bicycle paths, and a diverse menu of culinary options (Clark 2004, Lloyd & Clark 2001). This is evident even in cities where the traditions of in-town living are weak (Breen & Rigby 2004), such as Nashville, Houston, Charlotte, and Atlanta. Corresponding to the push to attract creative class residents is the adoption by city planners and nonprofits of the design principles associated with New Urbanism, which model the insights of Jane Jacobs (1961) and stress dense, mixed-use development and pedestrian-friendly environments (Katz 1993). The one-size-fits-all advocacy of the New Urbanism and the Creative Cities agendas, which has become a global template for urban development in the twenty-first century (Christens 2009, Marcuse 2000), must be examined in terms of the actual cities where they take root and the distinct challenges posed by specific urban histories that may offer up relatively uncongenial environments within which to enact new cultural and design strategies, a point especially salient in the American South (Gilderbloom 2008). Thus, recent scholarship suggests that the built environment is not easily adapted to New Urbanist principles (Lloyd 2011) and that Southern cities such as Atlanta are especially contentious areas when it comes to controversy over the arts and culture (Tepper 2011).

The move to create a core city population and nurture place identity in Southern cities may indeed provide a welcome antidote to the sprawling, deracinated character of regional urbanization in the last half century (Duany et al. 2000, Kunstler 1993). In addition to the presumably salutary effects on the creation of local community, new agendas stress sustainable growth and environmental responsibility (Creech & Musselwhite 2008). The intensification of residential high-rise construction in core city areas, dressed up with New Urbanist rhetoric, in fact corresponded in the early 2000s with the housing bubble (Lloyd & Christens 2012), whose collapse had particularly devastating effects in Florida. Moreover, as is widely noted, the utopian imagination of

community and diversity that New Urbanists argue will be enabled by enlightened design arguably masks a new politics of exclusion as the signature style of gentrification and displacement in the neoliberal urban context (Lloyd 2011, Smith 2002).

Immigration in the New South

The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have been characterized by important shifts in the nature of immigration, as regions in the American interior, including the Southeast, are for the first time experiencing a substantial influx of new immigrants. Within the American South, Texas and Florida distinguish themselves as long being lead receiving states for Latino immigration, trailing only California and New York. Historically, California and Texas have dominated immigration from Mexico, the most significant sending nation in Latin America. However, the combination of saturated labor markets, more aggressive immigration enforcement, and relatively slow job growth in California has pushed Mexican immigrants in recent years to explore new destinations (Massey & Capoferro 2008). The pull to the Southeast derives from the economic dynamism of the region and its propensity for creating low-wage and contingent jobs. This includes work in poultry packing in Tennessee, Arkansas, and North Carolina; oil industry jobs in Louisiana and Texas; and construction jobs throughout the region.

Historically, new immigrant arrivals flow to cities and regions where others have preceded them, leveraging recruitment networks and enclave economies to take root in hostile environments. This pattern creates inertia in the geographic distribution of immigrants, such that immigration to new destinations in the economically dynamic South has lagged demand in past decades. By the late 1980s, Latin American and Asian immigrants had established a toehold in major Southern cities, and population growth among these groups in the past two decades has been spectacular. Thus, Census estimates indicate that between 1990 and 2008, Latinos increased from 10,671 to 137,936 in the Charlotte MSA; 57,169 to 487,984 in the Atlanta MSA; 7,665 to 80,018 in the Nashville MSA; and 3,989 to 34,144 in the Birmingham MSA (Lippard & Gallagher 2011, p. 4). As is the case with black migrants to the South, new immigrants are especially likely to locate in the suburbs, a trend that creates new political dynamics (Jones-Correa 2008). Donato et al. (2005) have examined new immigrant toeholds in southern Louisiana, where Latinos are recruited in response to the contingent requirements of the gulf oil industry, showing how prevailing immigration policy, including guest-worker policies (the H-2B visa program), shapes recruitment strategies and immigrant assimilation for workers in a lucrative and dangerous economic sector.

Meanwhile, beginning in the late 1960s, South Asians in the US South arrived largely through restrictive immigration policy that opened up US borders for professionals, as differently classed and racialized subjects in relation to Latinos (Joshi 2006). Trailing these high human capital workers, the 1980 Refugee Act brought considerable numbers of nonprofessional South Asians to the United States. Florida and Texas now have large South Asian American populations alongside the regular sites of New York, Chicago, and San Francisco (Dhingra 2007). Furthermore, Atlanta has one of the fastest-growing South Asian communities in the United States, with South Asians outpacing established Asian American communities.

Scholars examining immigration to the Southeast note the "browning" of a region in which racial and ethnic difference (apart from Texas and Florida) had long been a matter of black and white (Jackson 2011, McConnell 2011, Tang 2011). As the region grows increasingly cosmopolitan, it also showcases intensive backlash, with the growth of xenophobic organizations and restrictive legislation. For many, this is further evidence of the persistently insular and reactionary nature of the American South; however, as Beck (2006) points out, anticosmopolitanism is in fact an organic feature

of globalization, evident in European capitals as well as on the Arizona border or in Deep South Alabama. Still, Southern reactions must be viewed in their unique historical context. Latino, South Asian, African, and Middle Eastern immigrants (some arriving with refugee status, such as Nashville's substantial Kurdish, Sudanese, and Somali populations) have come to public attention in the wake of the 2001 terrorist assault on New York and the subsequent war on terror (Joshi 2006). New immigrants contend with a different enforcement regime, as a result of the formation of the Department of Homeland Security and the replacement of the Immigration and Naturalization Services with Immigrant and Customs Enforcement. This more punitive regime forges alliances with local law enforcement via programs such as 287-g, deputizing municipal police to detain suspected undocumented migrants (Armenta 2012). Moreover, the persistent failure to establish comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level has prompted state and local governments to take matters into their own hands, with Alabama passing arguably the most restrictive legislation in the United States in 2011. Meanwhile, unlikely locales such as Nashville and its suburbs have become centers of controversy over Muslim immigration and assimilation, with vociferous opposition to a planned Islamic Center in suburban Murfreesboro, and anti-Sharia legislation introduced (unsuccessfully) in the state legislature.

ATLANTA: THE CAPITAL OF BLACK AMERICA?

In his classic 1903 collection of essays on the American color line, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois includes an elegiac rumination "On the Wings of Atlanta." Atlanta, like other Southern cities at mid-century, was barely developed, but it nevertheless contained a substantial proportion of African Americans well in advance of this becoming true in the industrial North, and it was playing a growing role in the Southern black experience. Du Bois (1903 [2006], p. 55) saw in Atlanta already the pull of modernity and Northern values; Atlanta "turned resolutely toward the future; and the future held aloft vistas of purple and gold[,] . . . her hundred hills [crowned] with factories." Having found much to criticize about the Northern black ghetto in his pioneering *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), Du Bois was ambivalent about the potential role of Atlanta in the strivings of black Southerners. He feared that Atlanta might lead "the South to dream of material prosperity as the touchstone of all success" (Du Bois 1903 [2006], p. 56) at the expense of nobler aspirations, anticipating critiques a century later by some in the black community of the crass materialism of urban hip-hop culture (Anderson 1999, Kitwana 2002). At the same time, Du Bois was enthusiastic about historically black Spellman and Morehouse universities, cornerstones of an educational agglomeration that today churns out the largest number of African American college graduates in the nation (Jewell 2006).

In the contemporary United States, Atlanta has emerged as a "superlative city" (Brenner 2003) for examining the black experience, where grinding inner-city poverty and segregation coexist with other major trends: the dismantling of traditional public housing (Bayor 2003, Oakley et al. 2011); the move of black Americans back to the urban and rural South (Falk et al. 2004, Stack 1996); increasing African American suburbanization; black entrepreneurial activity and the rise of an educated black (upper) middle class (Lacy 2007); and, increasingly, the production of black musical culture. Still, despite this incredibly fertile ground for research, and despite the centrality of racial and ethnic relations to US sociology, Atlanta remains comparatively understudied, even as studies of Chicago's South Side continue to accumulate.

In fact, according to the 2010 Census Atlanta has passed Chicago as the "Second City" of African American population (trailing only New York City), a capstone to the decades-long trend in which black Americans have moved South of the Mason-Dixon (Tabelese &

Gebeloff 2011). In Atlanta, as perhaps nowhere else in America, we can see in bold relief the contradictory and complicated experiences of black Americans in the age of Obama. On the one hand, Atlanta continues to feature an obstinately disadvantaged population of black core-city residents, who were unable to gain a toehold of opportunity through decades of dynamic economic growth in the region (see O'Connor et al. 2001). Still, the dominant narrative of black economic disadvantage since the 1960s derives from work conducted in the postindustrial North, and most especially Wilson's (1987) powerful dissection of Chicago's South Side. As Small (2008) argues, the use of Chicago as a blueprint for the structural basis of all segregated poverty (ghettos) in the United States obscures the wide variations in actual city histories, a point especially salient in the South, where, as noted above, deindustrialization is a far less prominent issue and where black residence and poverty follow more dispersed spatial patterns than in the hypersegregated North (Bayor 2000, Silver & Moeser 1995).

Sjoquist (2000, p. 1) refers to "the Atlanta paradox": "A paradox of substantial racial segregation in a community with a reputation for good race relations and of high inner-city poverty in the face of substantial economic growth." In a major work, Orfield & Ashkinaze (1991) detail the deleterious effects of conservative policy in Atlanta during the 1980s, isolating poor blacks from regional prosperity despite the election of the city's first African American mayor. Keating (2001) similarly argues that Atlanta's business-led regime managed to dominate the political agenda according to laissez-faire principles, effectively ignoring the claims of the city's majority black constituency by co-opting African American leadership. Consistent with the spatial mismatch hypothesis, this persistence of racial inequality corresponds in part to the high degree of economic growth that occurred in recent decades in Atlanta's suburbs and edge cities (Adelman et al. 2006, Bullard et al. 2000, Garreau 1991, Kasarda 1993). Several developments currently unsettle the standard mismatch approach. Atlanta has become the first American city to completely dismantle traditional public housing, removing one of the presumptive anchors of concentrated poverty; this may also come, however, with social dislocation and a loss of intergenerationally accumulated social supports even under conditions of social isolation and extreme poverty (Bayor 2003, Green et al. 2000, Oakley et al. 2011). Moreover, substantial gentrification has displaced poor blacks and significantly added to the share of white residents in the core city, creating new community institutions and economic opportunities that have nonetheless provided little benefit to the black majority (Hankins 2007, Martin 2007).

Still, the focus on inner-city poverty in Atlanta (inevitably framed by the wealth of scholarship on Northern ghettos) obscures the fact that the overwhelming majority of blacks in the metro area live in the suburbs. Atlanta is, along with Washington, DC, and Baltimore, one of only three major metro areas where in excess of 70% of the black population has a suburban address (Lacy 2007, p. 45), despite the fact that all three cities are better known for inner-city poverty and violence. In fact, Atlanta metro's proportion of black residents in the suburbs increased from 26.64% in 1970 to 78.51% in 2000 (Lacy 2007, p. 45)! To some degree this has meant the suburbanization of poverty, a new challenge for demographers and ethnographers alike. At the same time, Atlanta's DeKalb is the second most affluent majority black suburb in the country (trailing Maryland's Prince George's County); in 2006, its massive New Birth Missionary Baptist Church, led by controversial pastor Eddie Long, hosted the funeral of Coretta Scott King, attended by four US presidents. Atlanta has the largest percentage of black entrepreneurs in the country and a growing percentage of the sort of upper-middle-class, educated African Americans studied by Lacy (2007) in Maryland.

Abetted in part by the huge number of African American students in the region, at the historically black colleges and universities and also at Georgia State University, Atlanta has become a significant center of black youth

culture, hosting the black college party known as Freaknic in the 1990s, an event whose general conviviality belied the histrionic objections of local whites (Thompson 2007). Increasingly, the city also consolidates the production and distribution of rap, hip-hop, and soul music emanating from the region, under the moniker "the Dirty South" (Sarig 2007).

Sarig (2007, pp. 170–218) argues that the commercial consolidation of black musical culture in Atlanta makes it "the new Motown." In fact, contemporary Atlanta is analogous to 1960s Detroit in other ways; like Detroit in the 1960s, it is today arguably the capital city of black America. In the 1960s, Detroit hosted substantial black poverty and social unrest, but also had the highest rates of black homeownership and the highest comparative wages, much as Atlanta showcases stark divergences in poverty and privilege within the African American community today. But Atlanta is also a very different city than Detroit; manufacturing and organized labor, the foundations of black prosperity at mid-century, are mostly absent and always have been. This suggests that major approaches to African American poverty that stress the impact of deindustrialization, such as Wilson's (1987) seminal *The Truly Disadvantaged*, are inadequate to the still intense racialized poverty there. Moreover, the foundations of black prosperity in the city, a magnet for the African American middle class, are also historically original. It is in Atlanta, not Detroit or Chicago, that the future of African Americans in coming decades may be most sharply revealed.

NEW ORLEANS: THE SOCIOLOGY OF CATASTROPHE

As was affirmed in a deafening refrain post–Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans is among the most distinctive and beloved of American cities (Gotham 2007, pp. 1–3). In fact, even before the 2005 disaster the city had been subject to an unusual amount of scholarly attention among cities in the South, in this case precisely for the features making it an outlier within the regional and national urban systems. Race relations in the United States have long been considered as a binary of black and white, especially salient in the South where de jure apartheid brooked no space for indeterminacy in racial classification. New Orleans, conversely, is the wellspring for the concept of Creole identity (Hirsch & Logsdon 1992) and has garnered special attention with the postmodern move to reject binaries in favor of theories of hybridity and cultural complexity (Stewart 2007). Moreover, New Orleans has long been a global tourist destination, selling a distinctive brand identity that heavily incorporates African American and Creole cultural forms (Gotham 2007). The city, at least in its French Quarter, maintains a continuous festival ethos, anchored by the annual Mardi Gras. Mardi Gras, in its ideal formulation, exemplifies the concept of carnival, a cultural form noted for liminality and the blurring of normally rigid class and caste boundaries (Bakhtin 1984, Lipsitz 1988, Turner 1969). In practice, of course, Mardi Gras often amounts to little more than a puerile display of tacky commercialism, cheap beads, exposed breasts, and public drunkenness. Nonetheless, even while lodged in conservative Deep South Louisiana, New Orleans has been a magnet for alternative lifestyles, associated with sexual transgression, magic, and jazz, holding a privileged place in both the gay and the African American cultural imaginary (Rechy 1963). In addition to its annual tourist spectacles of Mardi Gras and the Jazz Festival, New Orleans routinely attracts mega-events such as the Super Bowl or the Essence Music Festival (the "Super Bowl of Soul").

The glamorous image of New Orleans and its much vaunted ethos of authenticity long masked a city in distress, with all industries other than tourism in terminal decline and significant portions of its majority black population living in abject poverty. Indeed, in contrast to virtually every other city in the region, New Orleans had lost population since 1960, even before the nation's costliest natural disaster scattered to the winds many who remained. Notes Gotham (2007) of the allegedly vibrant pre-Katrina New Orleans, "Between 1960 and

2000, the city lost a total of 156,000 people [off a peak population in 1960 of 640,000]. Over the decades, weak job growth and the loss of jobs in the chemical and petroleum industries have depressed the metropolitan economic base and contributed to an 18% poverty rate in 2000, making New Orleans the sixth poorest of the 100 largest metropolitan areas in the region" (p. 15). The millions of tourists flowing through the city each year studiously ignored the high levels of segregation and poverty, and so it was with no small shock in 2005 that Americans were forced to confront the huddled masses of mostly black bodies in the mega-event palace turned refugee center, the Louisiana Superdome (Forman & Lewis 2006, Young 2006).

At first glance, natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina might appear to be outside the purview of sociology, but in fact Katrina has galvanized social science researchers. There is a growing appreciation of the way that extreme weather events lay bare features of the social structure that may have previously been obscure (Klinenberg 2002). Beck (1992) notes that the complexity and interconnectedness of advanced technological societies increase the risks associated with both manmade and ecological disasters and that in any event human decisions and natural forces always interact in the outcomes of catastrophe. The title of Hartman & Squires's (2006) edited volume addressed to Katrina advances the thesis: *There Is No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster*. The fallout of Katrina far exceeded coastal Louisiana, as the Bush administration never overcame the failure of the national emergency response (and his initial apparent obliviousness to the scale of the event), and localities around the region were suddenly confronted by waves of refugees. Klinenberg (2002) demonstrates in his study of the 1995 Chicago Heat Wave that the effects of natural disaster are socially patterned, with African Americans, the poor, and the elderly disproportionately victimized in Chicago—a pattern baldly evident with Katrina in New Orleans.

Among other things, Klinenberg's (2002) study indicts patterns of neoliberal restructuring in American cities, which the heat wave showed to be wholly inadequate to the task of protecting the city's most vulnerable inhabitants. This tack has been taken up by popular and scholarly observers of the aftermath of Katrina. Like Klinenberg, scholars see Katrina as revealing the failures of free-market policies and the need for the reassertion of a strong welfare state (Danziger & Danziger 2006, Dreier 2006). The actual tenor of the post-Katrina response appears to be in the other direction, however, despite the popular disgust at the weak local and federal response to Katrina. Klein (2007) uses the aftermath of Katrina as evidence of her thesis that the right wing always uses disasters—from war to financial crises to hurricanes—as a pretense to assault the welfare state and advance free-market policy agendas, the so-called "Shock Doctrine." Historically, this thesis is probably not defensible, but the Katrina case does suggest its utility in the early twenty-first-century United States. Indeed, Gotham & Greenberg (2008, 2013) argue that both of the major urban catastrophes of the 2000s, Katrina and the terrorist attacks on 9/11, have been met with concertedly neoliberal responses. Thus, rebuilding efforts in New Orleans have been substantially outsourced at every level, and the dislocations of Katrina have allowed for the acceleration of market-based reforms in both education and public housing (Arena 2007). Meanwhile, the population of the region has experienced substantial flux, with many poor residents failing to return, but also with the significant recruitment of Latinos to serve as a flexible labor pool in reconstruction (Donato et al. 2007).

CONCLUSION

A central theme of this review is that the older terms of Southern distinctiveness—tenant farming, a rural agricultural economy, Jim Crow, one-party rule—have diminished or disappeared, emphasizing the role of urbanization in regional transformation. Still, there is reluctance to let go of the idea of a separate South, perhaps out of the persistent desire to demonize the region's primitivism and violence

(*Deliverance*, *Mississippi Burning*), or to romanticize its Magnolia-infused traditionalism (*Gone With the Wind*, *Steel Magnolias*). Some argue that the South is not merely a set of distinguishing institutions but a state of mind, a regional psychology that still holds out its distinctiveness against the nation (Goldfield 2002). This may be true, but in many cases the performance of Southerness resembles "symbolic ethnicity" (Gans 1979) and "fabricated authenticity" (Peterson 1997), expressed in catfish fries, NASCAR, college football, "lost cause" (i.e., Confederacy) memorabilia, bluegrass festivals, and so on, much of which is highly marketable for touristic and homegrown consumption. Others point out the Southernization of America expressed in the mainstreaming of country music (Feiler 1998), the diffusion of evangelical religion (Jorstad 1993), and the rise of Tea Party conservatism as a national movement.

The question of regional distinction cannot be easily answered, and this fact provides a wealth of opportunity for sociological research, taking into account the dialectical relationship between continuity and change in shaping contemporary social life. This review suggests that the persistent inclination to exoticize the South is counterproductive to the cause of accurate empirical, region-based research, which is not the same thing as saying that the distinctive regional past does not still shape its present in meaningful ways. In any case, there are good reasons for urban scholars, as well as researchers in race and ethnic relations, social movements, immigration, and economic sociology, to expand their templates to include long-neglected spaces of social life in America. Atlanta may today be a better place to study race relations than the South Side of Chicago, whereas New Orleans can be usefully compared to New York in the study of post-traumatic urban development. Given the region's rapid economic development and urban growth, it does not make sense to ignore it or to remain in thrall to stereotypes inherited from an era long gone.

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